Chapter 6

Urban Offensive Operations

. . . Capture Suez City "provided it does not become a Stalingrad situation."

Order to the Adan Armored Division
prior to its 1973 attack on Suez City
On the Banks of the Suez

Offensive urban operations (UO) are one of the most challenging operations that military forces can undertake. Campaigns and wars have sometimes hinged on their success or failure. Costly in resources, even when successful, they are not lightly entered into. Once engaged, they are executed rapidly and decisively. For reasons already discussed, threat forces defending in UO may gain advantages from the environment while Army force capabilities may diminish. Despite the challenges, Army forces conduct successful urban offensive operations by combining the Army's existing offensive doctrine with a thorough understanding of the environment.

PURPOSE OF URBAN OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

6-1. Like all offensive operations, urban offensive operations are designed to impose the will of commanders on the threat. The urban offense often aims to destroy, defeat, or neutralize a threat force. However, the purpose may be to achieve some effect relating to the population or infrastructure of the urban area. Army forces may conduct offensive operations to secure a port or a communications center, to eliminate a threat to a friendly government or the urban population, or to deny the threat use of urban infrastructure. No matter the purpose, commanders use a combined arms approach for successful urban offensive operations.

CONTENTS

CHARACTERISTICS OF URBAN OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

6-2. All offensive operations contain the characteristics of surprise, concentration, tempo, and audacity (see FM 3-0). These characteristics also apply to urban offensive operations.

SURPRISE

6-3. Army forces can achieve offensive surprise at two levels: operational and tactical. In urban offensive operations, operational surprise can be decisive. The goal is to attack the urban area before the threat expects it, from a direction he doesn't expect, or in a manner he doesn't expect. In major operations, this requires an attack against an area that appears *to the threat* to be safe from attack. Urban areas that meet this criterion are not easily accessible. Army forces launch such an attack in different ways: through a vertical assault using airborne or air assault forces, through an amphibious assault, or through a penetration followed by a rapid and deep advance. All three attacks aim to achieve surprise and to deny the threat time to prepare and establish a defense. Surprise in a major urban operation prevents a threat from falling back to occupy prepared positions in and around an urban area.

6-4. At lower tactical levels, forces achieve surprise by attacking asymmetrically. An asymmetric method attacks the threat so he cannot respond effectively. This may be achieved by using special operations forces (SOF) against a threat prepared for a conventional attack, by attacking decisively with heavy forces when the threat expects an effort by light forces or SOF, or by leveraging Army forces' extensive information operations (IO) capability. Offensive IO—primarily using IO elements of deception, electronic warfare, and operations security (OPSEC)—can help achieve surprise at all levels (see Chapter 4). Attacking at night surprises the threat and maximizes the Army forces' training, command and control (C2), and technological advantages. Attacking from unexpected or multiple directions achieves surprise by leveraging Army information systems (INFOSYS) and superior synchronization of combat power and capabilities.

CONCENTRATION

6-5. In UO, the attacking force creates a major advantage by concentrating the effects of combat power at the point and time of its choosing. The area and its compartmented effects naturally disperse and dissipate combat capability. The environment also hinders repositioning forces rapidly. Such effects can work equally against defending and attacking forces. However, in a well-prepared defense, the defender often has the advantage of interior lines. The defender can reinforce or reposition forces more quickly using covered and concealed routes (such as, sewers, tunnels, or prepared holes made in walls). Successful UO need synchronized air and ground maneuver with overwhelming effects from fires at decisive points on the urban battlefield. To achieve proper synchronization and precise effects, commanders consider the unique time and distance relationships set by the environment.

TEMPO

6-6. Tempo is the rate of military action. Commanders understand that the tempo of urban operations differs from operations in more open terrain. The

complexity and the potential risk of the urban environment may invoke a cautious and methodical response on the part of commanders and their staffs. While preparing and planning urban operations, commanders conducting major operations that include urban areas strive to maintain an active tempo in offensive operations. Often, the primary purpose of the threat's urban defense is to disrupt the rapid tempo of Army offensive operations. The synchronized application of combat power and anticipation of threat reactions achieve tempo. The rapid tempo of events places Army forces in positions of advantage and helps achieve surprise. Controlling operational tempo and not allowing the different tempo of urban operations to adversely affect other operations is a challenge for commanders of major operations.

The Operational Context of Urban Operations Brittany Ports – August to September 1944

The plan for the invasion of Normandy, France, in June 1944 was meticulously developed. The plan not only addressed the invasion itself, but also contained detailed planning for the campaign to follow. A major concern of the detailed campaign planning was logistics. To address this critical concern, and specifically the problem of ports to supply the allied armies once ashore, the pre-invasion planning called for the major ports of the French province of Brittany—Brest, Lorient, and Saint Nazaire—to be objectives of General Patton's Third Army, once it was activated.

Early August 1944, almost two months after the successful Normandy invasion, the operational situation significantly differed from that envisioned by the D-Day planners. General Montgomery's Twenty-first Army Group was still fighting in the Bocage of Normandy. In contrast, General Bradley's Twelfth Army Group had just achieved a major breakthrough at Saint Lo, secured the Cotentin Peninsula, and reached the city of Avranches. Here was a decision point. Bradley and Eisenhower had to decide whether to adhere to the original plan and turn west with Patton's forces to secure the peninsula or to take advantage of the breakout at Saint Lo and turn east to exploit the disruption of the German defenses.

Ultimately they reached a compromise. General Middleton's VIII Corps was tasked to secure the peninsula, and the bulk of Patton's Army, three Army corps, was turned northeast to exploit the operational collapse of the main German defenses. See Figure 6-1 on page 6-4.

Middleton's corps sprinted into the peninsula with the 4th and 6th Armored Divisions leading the way. However, poor communications, disagreements between commands, and contradictory orders caused the corps to hesitate before pushing the two divisions to continue to exploit toward the ports. The result: the 6th Armored Division missed an opportunity to seize Brest against light resistance by one day. The 4th Armored Division, after capturing the smaller port of Vannes, was also frustrated on the approaches to Lorient. The American reaction to the inability to rapidly seize the ports demonstrated an understanding of changing circumstances. The 6th Armored Division turned the attack at Brest to the 8th Infantry Division and then relieved the 4th Armored Division at Lorient. The 4th Armored was moved to rejoin the rest of Third Army exploiting to the east and north. Ultimately Brest fell to VIII Corps on 19 September after a 43-day siege by three infantry divisions. The victory yielded 36,000 German prisoners of war

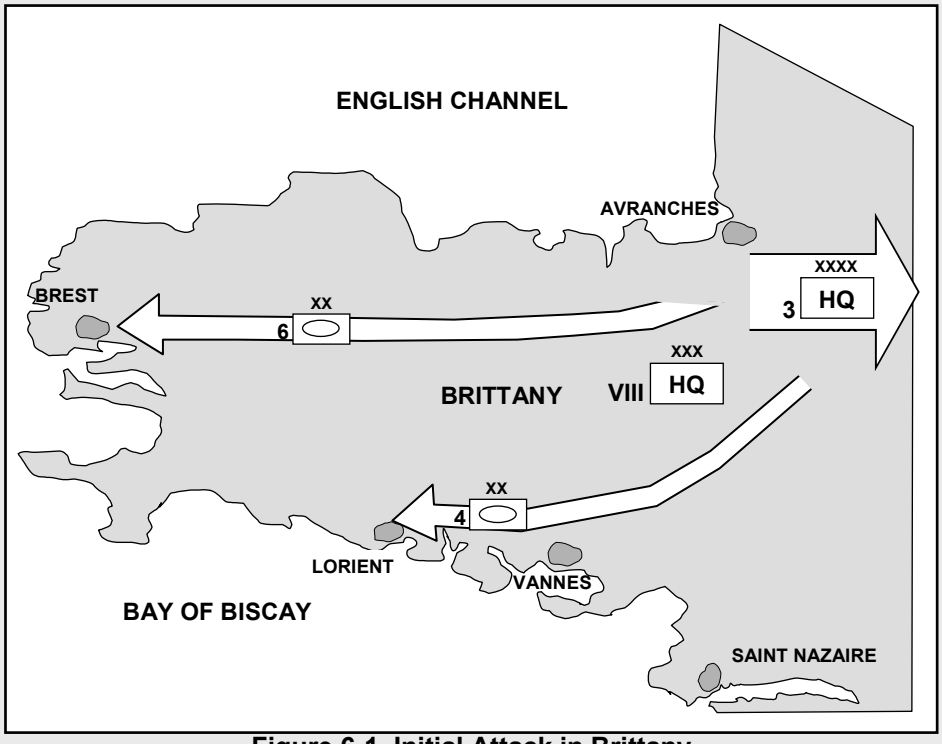

Figure 6-1. Initial Attack in Brittany

(POWs). However, the German defense and demolitions of the port left the port without an impact on the logistic situation of the allies. Brest cost the US Army almost 10,000 casualties and the commitment of significant supplies. The experience convinced commanders to surround and bypass the other major Brittany ports. Lorient and Saint Nazaire remained under German control, deep in allied territory, until the war ended ten months later (see Figure 6-2).

The operational lessons of the Brittany campaign are numerous. First, commanders are responsible to continually assess assumptions and decisions made during planning based on the changing circumstances of the battlefield. This includes the planning decision to conduct urban offensive operations. When the allies arrived at the Brittany Peninsula, the focus of the operational maneuver was no longer securing logistics facilities but exploiting the breakthrough at Saint Lo and the disintegrating the German defense. The bulk of Third Army then was turned to the north and east rather than west into the peninsula.

The Brest experience also demonstrates that the costs of urban offensive operations are continually assessed against the operational value of the objective. This lesson was applied to the cities of Lorient and Saint Nazaire. The cities were never seized from the Germans because their logistic value failed to warrant the required resources. German retention of the ports had no major adverse effect on the overall campaign.

Another lesson is that commanders cannot allow urban operations to disrupt the tempo of other offensive operations. One German goal of defending the ports was to disrupt the rapid tempo of the US exploitation. They failed to achieve this

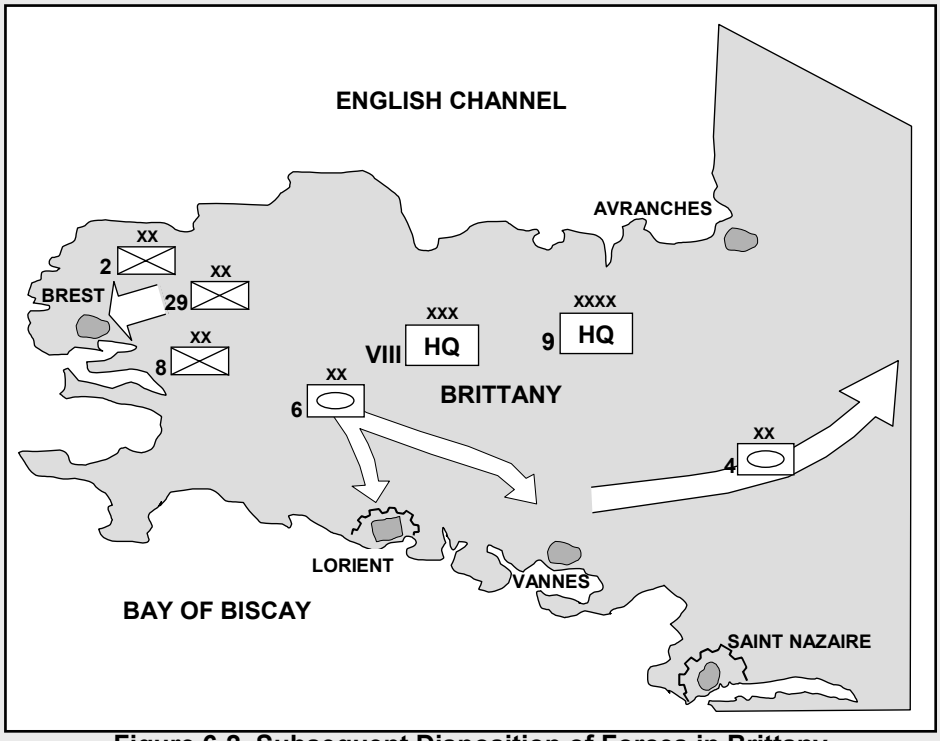

Figure 6-2. Subsequent Disposition of Forces in Brittany

goal because General Bradley continued the exploitation with the bulk of Third Army and executed the original plan with only a single corps.

Finally, commanders cannot allow emotion to color their decision to conduct or continue UO. The failure of 6th Armored Division to seize Brest rapidly caused some commanders to believe that Brest had to be captured because the prestige of the Army was committed to the battle. Costs of the continuing combat operations to seize Brest were significant. These resources might have been better committed elsewhere in the theater.

6-7. Tactical tempo is also important in urban combat. Because of the complex terrain, defending forces can rapidly occupy and defend from a position of strength. Once Army forces initiate tactical offensive operations, they cannot allow the threat to set the tempo of the operation. Instead, attacking forces seek to maintain a high tempo of operations. However, the tactical tempo of urban operations differs from operations in other terrain. Not necessarily slow, it requires a careful balance of preparation, speed, and security. In terms of unit fatigue, resource consumption, and contact with the threat, the tempo of most urban offensive operations may be rated as very high. On the other hand, in distances traveled and time consumed to achieve objectives, the tempo of many urban offensive operations might be rated as slow. The urban battlefield's density concentrates activity and consumes resources in a relatively small area. The lack of terrain seized or secured is not to be construed to mean a low tempo in the battle. In reality, the natural tempo of urban operations is not faster or slower than other types of operations,

merely different. A higher tempo of operations, however, can favor forces which are better led, trained, prepared, and resourced.

6-8. A high tactical tempo in urban offensive operations challenges logisticians to provide for the increased consumption of munitions and degrades soldiers' physical capabilities. Commanders anticipate these challenges and develop the means and abilities to overcome them. In the past, these challenges forced commanders to conduct urban offensives cyclically. They used night and other periods of limited visibility to resupply, rest, and refit forces. The environment influenced the tempo of their operations. This type of "battle rhythm" resulted in the forces spending each new day attacking a rested threat that was in a well-prepared position.

6-9. Army forces must maintain the tempo. Offensive operations continue even during darkness. Moreover, Army forces increase the tempo of operations at night to leverage the limited visibility capabilities, increased situational understanding, training, and INFOSYS that give an advantage to Army forces in all environments. To overcome the physical impact of the environment on soldiers, commanders retain a large reserve to rotate, continuing offensive operations at night. The force that fights in daylight becomes the reserve, rests, and conducts sustaining operations while another force fights at night. Army forces can then maintain the tempo of operations and leverage technological advantages in urban offensive combat.

6-10. Tempo in UO does not necessarily mean speed. Offensive operations balance speed, security, and adequate firepower. Commanders plan for the complex tactical environment and the requirements to secure flanks and airspace as the operation progresses. Mission orders allow subordinate units to make the most of tactical advantages and fleeting opportunities.

AUDACITY

6-11. Audacity is a simple plan of action, boldly executed. Superb execution and calculated risk exemplify it. In an urban attack, a thorough assessment of the physical terrain can mitigate risk. The terrain's complexity can be studied to reveal advantages to the attacker. Audacity can also be embodied in an operation by inventively integrating the direct action tasks of SOF throughout the operation. Combining SOF actions with conventional attacks can asymmetrically unhinge a defensive plan.

URBAN OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS AND BATTLEFIELD ORGANIZATION

6-12. Urban offensive operations, like all operations, are framed in the overall doctrinal framework of sustaining, shaping, and decisive operations. Each operation is essential to the success of an urban offensive, and usually two or more of these operations occur simultaneously. Sustaining operations in urban offensive operations ensure freedom of action. They occur throughout the area of operations (AO) and for the duration of the operation. Shaping operations in urban offensive operations create the conditions for decisive operations. In UO, much of the shaping effort focuses on isolation, which is critical in both major operations and tactical battles and engagements. Decisive operations are attacks that conclusively determine the outcome of UO.

These attacks strike at a series of decisive points and directly lead to neutralizing the threat's center of gravity.

SUSTAINING OPERATIONS

6-13. Commanders conducting urban offensive operations ensure security of the sustaining operation and bases; in many situations, sustaining operations may be the greatest vulnerability of the attacking force. Those supporting an urban offensive are tailored to the urban environment and are well forward. Ideally, the supporting forces closely follow the combat forces and move within or just outside the urban area as soon as they secure an area. Operating in the urban area during offensive operations allows the sustaining operation to take advantage of the defensive attributes of the environment for security purposes.

6-14. Counterattacks against sustaining operations may take the form of special operations activities aimed at lines of communications (LOCs) leading to or within the urban area. Choke points—such as bridges, tunnels, and mountain passes—are vulnerable to these attacks and may require combat forces to protect them. Threat forces attack the LOC to blunt the Army's combat power advantage in the urban area.

6-15. Attacks against the LOC into the urban area may also attempt to isolate the attacking Army forces from its sustainment base. Isolated forces in an urban area are greatly disadvantaged. Commanders plan and aggressively execute strong measures to protect their LOC, even if it requires reduced combat power to execute their offensive operation.

6-16. Sustaining operations anticipate the volume and unique logistics requirements of urban operations. Specialized individual equipment—such as grappling hooks, ladders, and pads—is identified and provided to troops in quantity before they are needed. Forces stockpile and distribute their attacking units' special munitions requirements including small arms, explosives, and grenades of all types, precision artillery munitions, and mortar ammunition. Forces also supply transport to move the resources rapidly forward, both to and through the urban environment. Sustaining operations cannot rely on "operational pauses" to execute their tasks. Commanders plan to continuously supply resources and capabilities to the most forward combatants as offensive operations advance.

6-17. Sustaining operations also anticipate the growth of sustainment requirements as Army forces secure and take responsibility for large portions of the urban area. The success of Army urban offensive operations will often uncover the civil population in former threat occupied areas. It may attract the civil population from sections of the urban area where the Army is not operating to areas occupied by Army forces. Rural populations may migrate to the urban area as the result of successful Army offensive operations.

6-18. Army forces may be required to take initial responsibility to provide for the urban population. This consideration is integrated into logistics planning and organization from the start of the planning process. To be successful and efficient in such a situation, logistics planning includes Army civil affairs (CA) specialists and local government representatives. It also integrates and

consults with the international community and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that might augment or supplement Army logistics capabilities.

SHAPING OPERATIONS

6-19. Shaping operations that support the urban attack separate into those focused on isolating the threat and all others. Army forces isolate the threat to ensure successful urban offensive operations. Depending on the threat reaction to isolation efforts and the nature of the threat center of gravity, this task may become decisive. Other shaping operations include those common to all offensive operations and others unique to urban operations. Unique urban shaping operations may include securing a foothold in a well-fortified defensive sector, securing key infrastructure, or protecting noncombatants. Because of the nature of UO, shaping operations may consume a much larger proportion of the force than during other operations and may take place both inside and outside the urban area (see Applying the Urban Operational Framework: Panama in Chapter 5). By successfully isolating a threat force, the force needed to conduct the decisive operation may be relatively small.

DECISIVE OPERATIONS

6-20. A tactical commander fights decisive urban combat, whereas commanders conducting a larger major operation influence urban combat by setting the conditions for tactical success. Higher commanders may directly influence urban offensive operations by operational maneuver, by coordinating joint fires, by closely coordinating conventional forces, or with SOF.

6-21. Tactical urban offensive operations quickly devolve into small-unit tactics of squads, platoons, and companies seizing their objectives. The compartmented effect of the terrain and the obstacles to command and control of small units, especially once they enter close combat inside buildings or underground, often restricts the higher commander's ability to influence operations. Commanders influence the actions of subordinates by clearly identifying the center of gravity and decisive points; using mission orders (as discussed in Chapter 5); developing effective task organizations; and synchronizing their sustaining, shaping, and decisive operations.

6-22. Like all operations, successful decisive operations in UO depend on identifying the decisive points so the forces can destroy or neutralize the threat's center of gravity. Seizing a key structure or system that makes the threat's defense untenable; interdicting a key resupply route that effectively isolates the threat force from his primary source of support; or isolating the threat so that his force can no longer influence friendly activity may be more effective than his outright destruction.

6-23. Commanders select the right subordinate force for the mission and balance it with appropriate attachments. Higher commanders do not direct how to organize the small tactical combined arms teams, but they ensure that subordinates have the proper balance of forces from which to form these teams. Successful urban offensive operations require small tactical combined arms teams. Urban offensive operations require abundant infantry as the base of this force. However, successful urban combat requires a combined arms approach (of which armored and mechanized forces will be essential)

adjusted for the conditions of the environment. Precision-capable artillery systems generally support urban operations better than rocket artillery.

6-24. Divisions entering urban combat may require additional resources. These resources include military intelligence support in the form of linguists, human intelligence (HUMINT) specialists, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Engineering assets will be at a premium; the task organization of a task force executing the decisive operation may require a one-to-one ratio of engineer units to combat units. Corps and higher engineering support may be necessary to meet these requirements and to repair vital and specialized infrastructure. A tailored and dedicated corps support battalion or corps support group may need to assist in providing anticipated support to a displaced and stressed civil population. Finally, divisional CA units may require augmentation to deal with NGOs and civilian government issues.

6-25. Successfully conducting decisive operations in the urban environment requires properly synchronizing the application of all available combat power. Army forces have a major advantage in the command and control of operations. Commanders use this advantage to attack numerous decisive points simultaneously or in rapid succession. They also use it to attack each individual decisive point from as many directions and with as many different complementary capabilities as possible. Commanders completely understand urban environmental effects on the battle operating systems to envision and execute the bold and imaginative operations required. Significantly, these operations require that C2 systems account for the mitigating effects of the environment as execution occurs.

6-26. Properly synchronized actions considerably enhance the relative value of the combat power applied at the decisive points. They present to the threat more requirements than he has resources with which to respond. Synchronized IO and multiple maneuver actions paralyze the threat's decisionmaking capacity with information overload combined with attacks on his C2 systems. Additionally, well-synchronized actions limit the time the threat has to make decisions and forces him into bad decisions. In the urban environment, these effects are enhanced because C2 systems are already strained, poor decisions are harder to retrieve, and units that do not react are isolated and destroyed.

FORMS AND TYPES OF URBAN OFFENSE

6-27. Traditional forms of offensive maneuver include envelopment, turning movement, infiltration, penetration, and frontal attack. Traditional types of offensive operations are movement to contact, attack, exploitation, and pursuit. These traditional forms listed apply to urban combat. Some have greater application to an urban environment than others do. Moreover, success will belong to commanders who imaginatively combine and sequence these forms and types throughout the depth, breadth, and height of the urban battlefield. This is true at the lowest tactical level and in major operations.

FORMS OF OFFENSIVE MANEUVER

Envelopment

6-28. The envelopment is the ideal maneuver for isolating threat elements in the urban area or isolating the area itself. A deep envelopment effectively isolates the defending forces and sets the conditions for attacking the urban area from the flank or rear. Yet, enveloping an objective or threat force in the urban area is often harder since achieving speed of maneuver in the environment is so difficult (see Figure 6-3). Vertical envelopment, however, works effectively if Army fires can effectively suppress or neutralize the threat air defense.

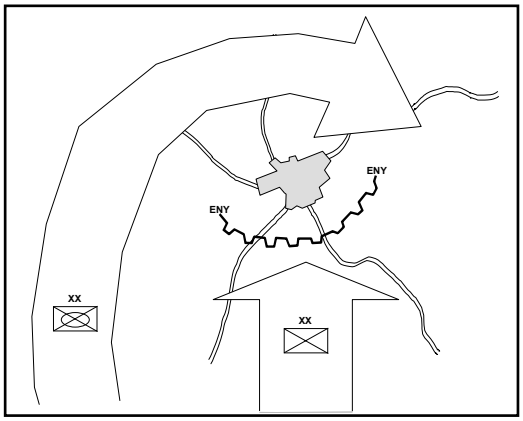

Figure 6-3. Envelopment Isolates an Urban Area

Turning Movement

6-29. Turning movements can also be extremely effective in major operations (see Figure 6-4). By controlling key LOCs into the urban area, Army forces can force the threat to abandon the urban area entirely. These movements may also force the threat to fight in the open to regain control of LOCs.

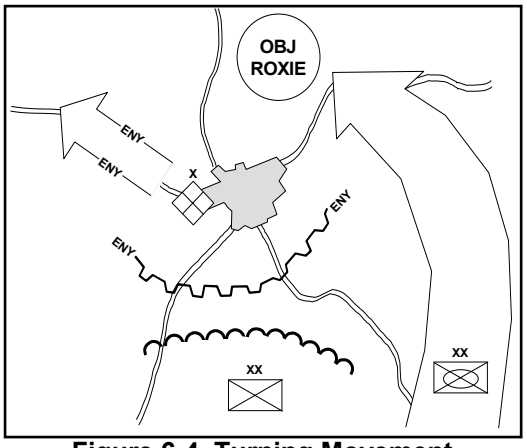

Figure 6-4. Turning Movement

Infiltration

6-30. Infiltration secures key objectives in the urban area while avoiding unnecessary combat with threat defensive forces on conditions favorable to them (see Figure 6-5). This technique seeks to avoid the threat's defense using stealthy, clandestine movement through all dimensions of the urban area to occupy positions of advantage in the threat's rear (or elsewhere). It depends on the careful selection of objectives that threaten the integrity of the threat's defense and superior COP. Well-planned and resourced deception operations may potentially play

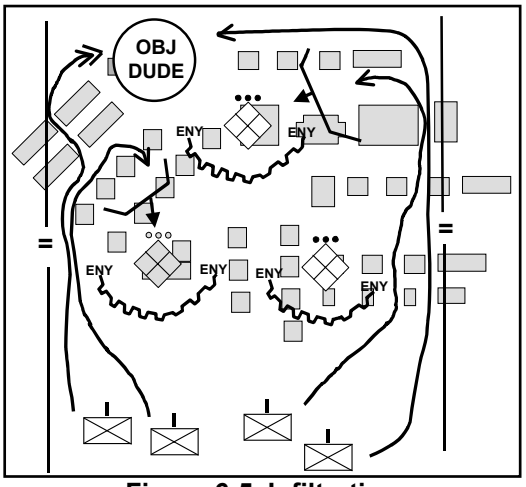

Figure 6-5. Infiltration

a critical role in masking the movement of infiltrating forces. The difficulty of infiltration attacks increases with the size and number of units involved. It is also more difficult when Army forces face a hostile civilian population. Under such circumstances, infiltration by conventional forces may be impossible. Armored forces are generally inappropriate for infiltration operations. However, they may infiltrate large urban areas if the threat is not established in strength and had insufficient time to prepare defenses.

Penetration

6-31. Penetration is the most useful form of attack against a prepared and comprehensive urban defense (see Figure 6-6). It focuses on successfully attacking a decisive point. Ideally in urban combat, multiple penetrations in all dimensions are focused at the same decisive point or on several decisive points simultaneously. In urban combat, the flanks of a penetration attack are secure, and resources are positioned to exploit the penetration once achieved.

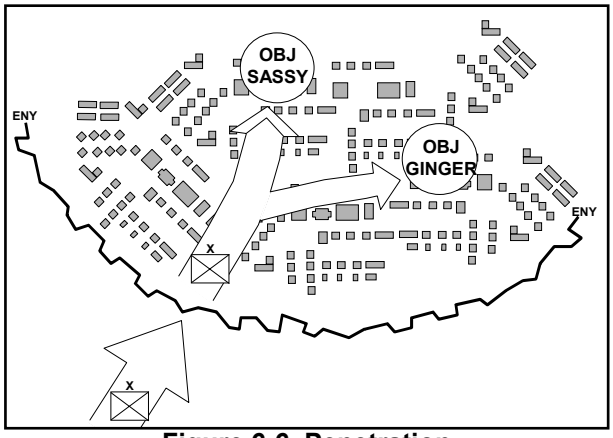

Figure 6-6. Penetration

Frontal Attack

6-32. Frontal attacks are the least favorable form of maneuver against an urban area (see Figure 6-7). They require many resources to execute properly, risk dispersing combat power into nonessential portions of the area, and risk exposing more of the force than necessary to threat fires. In urban offensive combat, forces most effectively use the frontal attack at the lowest tactical level once they set conditions to ensure that they have achieved overwhelming combat power. Then the force of the frontal attack overwhelms the threat with speed, firepower, and shock action.

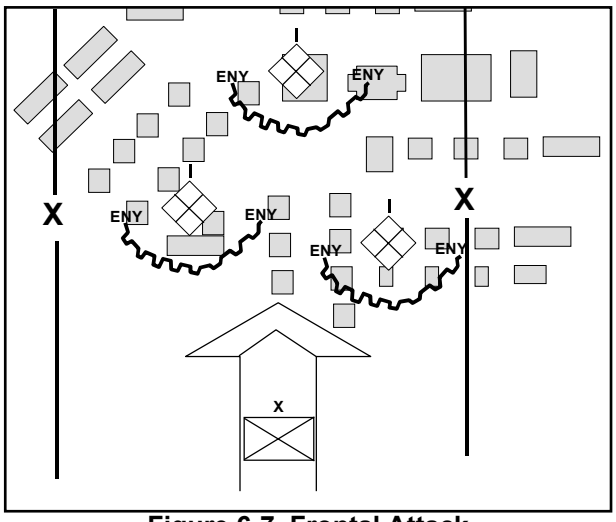

Figure 6-7. Frontal Attack

Forms of Attack in the Urban Offense
Metz – 1944

In November 1944, the US Third Army launched its final effort to take the French city of Metz from the defending Germans. This was the Army's third attempt. The first attempt had been a surprise, mounted attack. This was followed by a series of piecemeal infantry assaults on the surrounding fortresses. Finally, a deliberate effort was made to take the city in a coordinated effort by XX Corps.

The initial failures stemmed from a shortage of resources on the US side, to include fuel and units—especially infantry. This added to the ad-hoc nature of the first two efforts. The third effort, though more deliberate, was still constrained by resources. XX Corps could only muster three nearly full-strength infantry divisions to attack the German's defending with four under-strength divisions.

The third attempt to take Metz demonstrates how a corps operates with multiple divisions using various forms of attack to achieve its objective in urban offensive operations.

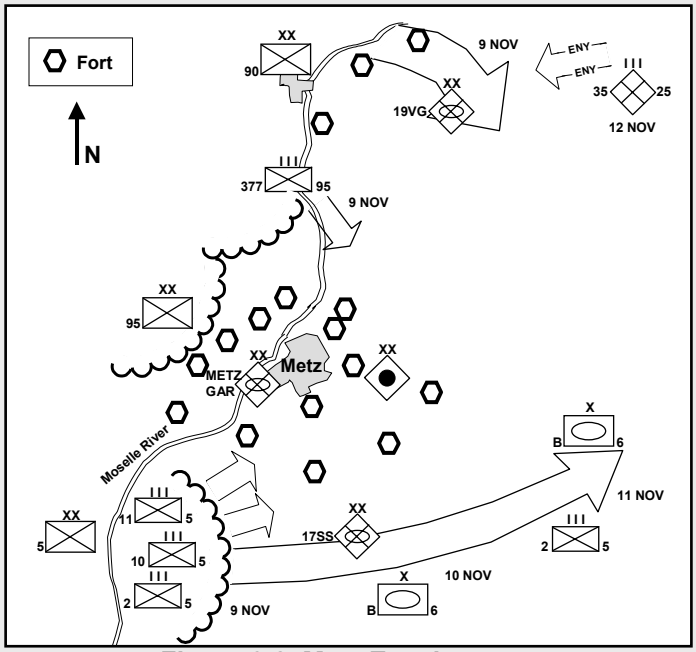

Figure 6-8. Metz Envelopment

The opening phase of the Metz battle had attacks by the 90th and 5th Infantry Divisions to envelop the city from the north and south (see Figure 6-8). This isolated the city and ensured the garrison could not escape nor be reinforced. The garrison was under orders from Hitler not to conduct a breakout and to resist to the last man; thus, German forces strongly counterattacked both wings of the envelopment to prevent isolation.

The second phase of the operation was the penetration of the city defenses from multiple directions. The 5th Infantry Division penetrated into the city with the 10th and 11th Infantry Regiments from the south. The 95th Infantry Division penetrated into the city from the north with the 377th Infantry Regiment and TF Bacon. Simultaneously, the 95th Infantry Division infiltrated battalions through the string of fortress positions guarding the western approaches into the city, isolated, and bypassed these positions with its other two regiments.

The final reduction of the defense was a series of battalion frontal attacks, which took place against the last remaining strongholds within the city. Even in these final engagements, however, the infantry battalions isolated, bypassed, then attacked from the flanks and rear whenever possible (see Figure 6-9).

The city was declared secured on 19 November. However, at that point more than a half-dozen of the fortresses had yet to be reduced. The 95th Infantry Division, after a four-day rest, quickly moved forward to rejoin the still rapidly advancing corps forward elements. Elements of the 5th Infantry Division remained in siege posture around the remaining strong points, the last of which surrendered on 19 December 1944 when it ran out of food. US forces made no efforts to attempt to assault these bypassed fortresses although extensive psychological operations (PSYOP) were used.

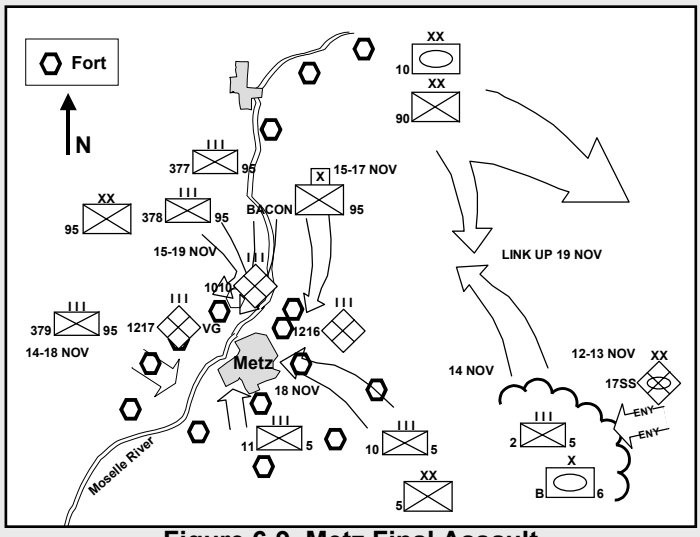

Figure 6-9. Metz Final Assault

TYPES OF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

Movement to Contact

6-33. In an urban area where the threat situation is vague, Army forces conduct a movement to contact to establish or regain threat contact and develop the situation. Often a movement to contact in an urban area occurs as both sides try to establish their influence or control over a contested population center. The situation determines whether the movement to contact or its specific technique, the search and attack, is appropriate. A conventional force-oriented movement to contact will likely take place when friendly and threat conventional forces attempt to establish control simultaneously. Initially, neither side is defensive. The friendly force aims to quickly locate and fix the threat while establishing control of the urban area and its key infrastructure. The search and attack technique works well when a smaller threat has established a noncontiguous defense in an urban area. This operation is characterized by the friendly point defense of key infrastructure, robust reconnaissance, and rapidly concentrated combat power to fix and defeat or destroy threat resistance once located.

6-34. A meeting engagement often results from the movement to contact. It occurs when a moving force that is partially deployed for battle collides with and engages a threat at an unexpected time and place. In a meeting engagement in an urban area, the unit that reacts most quickly and decisively will likely win. Rapid and accurate decisionmaking depends heavily on understanding the nature of the urban area and its impact on operations. Thus, in a meeting engagement, commanders quickly assess the impact and role of all components of the urban environment (terrain, infrastructure, and society)

on the operation. Responsive reconnaissance and situational understanding are also important. This permits accurate decisionmaking regarding where to attack, where to defend, and how to allocate resources. Situational understanding enhanced by digital INFOSYS that provide an enhanced common operational picture (COP) facilitates the rapid reaction of Army units and a synchronized response. This reaction and response allow Army forces to seize the initiative and dominate the threat.

Attack

6-35. The attack is the most common and likely offensive operation that Army forces will conduct in an urban environment. Commanders conducting major operations and commanders of large tactical units usually execute deliberate attacks. In the urban environment, units larger than battalion-size rarely conduct hasty attacks. Hasty attacks are common below company level as units use their initiative to take advantage of tactical opportunities. Larger units will conduct hasty attacks when threat defenses are disrupted or unprepared, to take advantage of an unexpected situation, and to prevent the threat from establishing or re-establishing a coherent defense.

Exploitation

6-36. Exploitation follows a successful attack to disrupt the threat in depth. Commanders of major operations consider focusing exploitation attacks on urban areas. A threat defeated in an attack will attempt to rally units, reinforce with reserves, and reorganize his defense. With its information and communications capability, transportation network, and defensive attributes, the urban area is the natural focal point to reestablish a disrupted defense. By establishing urban centers as the objectives of the exploitation, commanders deny the threat the location he needs to reestablish his defense. The exploitation focuses on the urban area as well as on the remnants of the threat. A successful exploitation to seize an urban area works efficiently because the attack preempts the defense and denies the threat the full advantages of urban terrain.

6-37. Commanders conducting exploitation acknowledge the vulnerability of their forces to counterattack and ambush in urban areas. An urban area provides ideal cover and concealment to hide threat reserves, reinforcements, or reorganized forces. Constrictions of routes into and through the urban area make exploitation forces a potentially dense target and limit maneuver options. Robust and well-coordinated reconnaissance, tactical dispersal, and use of advance guard security forces protect against this threat (see Defensive Combat Power: Suez City vignette in Chapter 7).

Pursuit

6-38. The pursuit is designed to destroy threat forces attempting to escape. It focuses on the threat and not on urban areas. When conducting a pursuit, Army forces move through undefended urban areas and bypass those in which threat forces successfully take refuge. The threat will likely attempt to use urban areas to disrupt the pursuit and permit the threat main body to escape. Commanders prevent escape by denying the threat the time to establish forces in urban areas that cannot be bypassed. The agility of Army

aviation forces for attack, reconnaissance, and transportation is essential to execute a successful pursuit around and through urban areas.

URBAN OFFENSIVE CONSIDERATIONS

6-39. The urban operational framework (assess, shape, dominate, and transition) provides a structure for developing considerations unique to urban offensive operations. The considerations vary depending on the situation and scale of the operation. Some considerations applicable to major operations that include an urban area will also be considerations at the tactical level focused in the urban area. However, no set rules exist. All urban operations are unique. Issues addressed at the operational level in one situation may be addressed in a new situation only at the tactical level. Under the right circumstances, a consideration may become an operational issue, a tactical issue, or a combination of the two. The following identifies some planning and execution issues that commanders conducting major operations address.

ASSESS

6-40. The first requirement, and a continuing requirement throughout the conduct of urban operations, is the assessment of the situation. Commanders base this assessment on detailed information regarding the particular urban area. Since the threat will likely dominate or control most of the urban area during the planning phase of offensive operations, accurate assessment of the urban environment will be difficult. A comprehensive intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) effort in support of a rigorous intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) process overcomes this obstacle.

Integrated Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance

6-41. The commander of a major operation that includes an urban area, unlike his subordinate commanders, can target reconnaissance deep into the AO and area of interest. This begins the application of ISR resources against the urban area that may lead to decisive ground operations. This ISR effort and the assessment it supports continue as long as the urban area remains in the AO. Commanders of major operations initially direct ISR assets on those information requirements that support determining whether or not to conduct urban offensive operations. Once decided, ISR resources shift to support the planning and execution of the operation in the urban area.

6-42. The first resources that a senior commander can use are national and strategic sensors. He requests them through the appropriate joint force commander. The commander aggressively pursues full use of these systems to begin building an initial database for analyzing the significant aspects of the terrain; key infrastructure considerations; the status and disposition of the population; and the size, type, and disposition of threat forces in the area.

6-43. Simultaneously, multiple intelligence sources contribute to the database. The sources collect, process, store, display, and disseminate the relevant information on large urban areas through open and classified resources. These information sources include—

- Historical research.
- Travel brochures that include cultural information and recent maps.

- Classified debriefings of diplomats, businesses, DOD personnel, and allies.
- Military maps of the urban area.
- Previous intelligence assessments of the country, government, and population.

The gathering and analysis of human intelligence plays a critical part of this process and assists commanders in understanding ethnic, cultural, religious, economic, and political facets of the environment.

6-44. As the intelligence and the national reconnaissance and surveillance efforts progress, commanders will insert, if available and feasible, Special Forces reconnaissance assets into the urban environment. These elements will seek to confirm or deny the information received from imagery intelligence (IMINT), signals intelligence (SIGINT), and HUMINT sources. Among many factors, using SOF depends on their availability, the particular urban area, the area's ethnic composition, and the relationship between the urban population and the threat. Other joint operational reconnaissance and surveillance assets that higher-echelon commanders may have available might include the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System, Guard Rail targeting aircraft, UAVs, and space-based systems.

6-45. The commander's staff will use all sources of information—IMINT and SIGINT sensors, HUMINT, historical research, and reconnaissance—to refine his ability to assess the urban environment. Digitally linking subordinate commanders with information sources helps to develop a COP essential to their situational understanding of the urban environment. The IPB process guides this assessment. As operations progress, additional reconnaissance and surveillance assets may become available. These may include corps intelligence assets including UAVs, corps long-range reconnaissance and surveillance units, counterfire radar, and air and ground cavalry. As these assets are employed, they are linked into the net of sources sharing information and further refine a common situational understanding of the environment. The major limitation shared by most corps assets is range. Corps reconnaissance has only a limited capability to conduct ISR with organic assets when out of contact with the AO. Thus, corps reconnaissance efforts, once in range, are most efficiently used against the most high-value information requirements.

Focused Assessment Efforts

6-46. In urban offensive operations, the tactical commander's assessment focuses on defeating the threat in the urban area within the constraints of the environment. Toward this end, identifying and assessing decisive points to attack is a commander's priority assessment task. Some unique aspects of the urban environment also require the focus of the commander's assessment efforts. These include the character of the urban defense, collateral damage considerations, and the effects of the environment on friendly and threat courses of action.

6-47. **Character of the Urban Defense.** To be both efficient and effective, Army urban offensive operations focus on what is decisive. Decisive points for an urban attack depend primarily on the mission within the urban area. They can vary widely in composition and size. Since commanders only focus

on the essential, they may determine the decisive point to be a single building or a limited sector of an urban area. It could be an entire system within the urban infrastructure such as communications and information, or a limited subsystem of the transportation and distribution infrastructure such as a single airfield. Sometimes what is decisive in the urban area is the threat military capability, but even this large an objective, when carefully analyzed, may not require destruction of all threat forces or control of all a large urban area. Decisive points relate directly to the threat's center of gravity and to mission success. Some decisive points related to the urban threat's center of gravity may be physically located outside the urban area.

6-48. To gain specifics on threat dispositions within the urban area requires reconnaissance capability to see into the depths of the area and the intelligence capability to determine the threat's likely defensive course of action. With this information, commanders can determine decisive points and apply Army combat power discretely against them. Effective urban offensive operations require detailed situational understanding of an area of interest that extends well beyond the perimeter of the urban area.

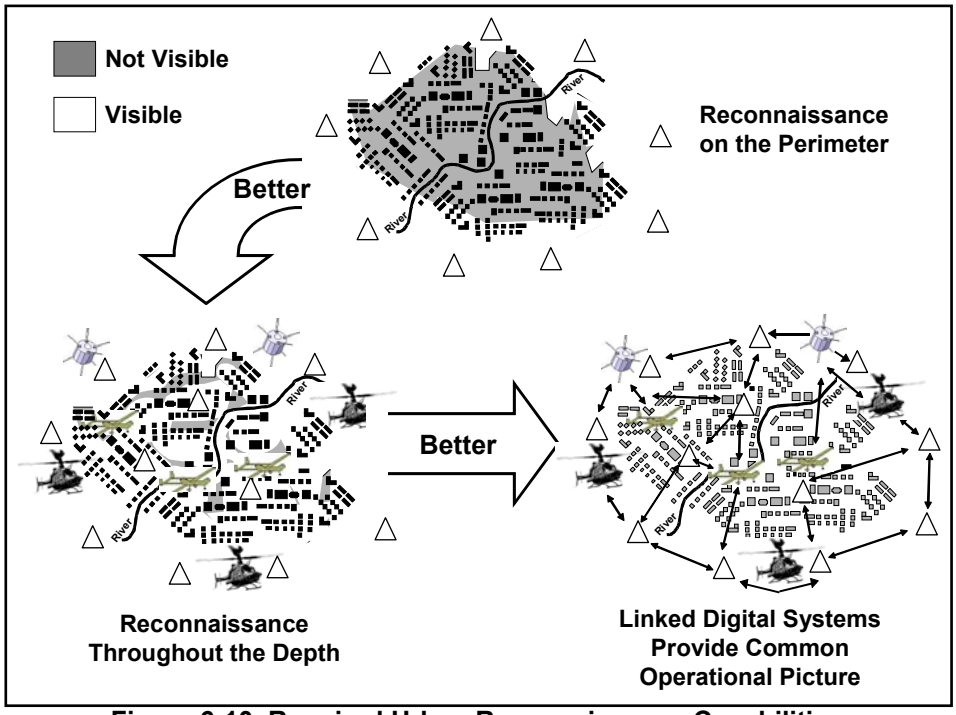

Figure 6-10. Required Urban Reconnaissance Capabilities

6-49. Commanders see throughout the depth of the urban area using several actions (see Figure 6-10). First, they evaluate sensor data and imagery. This guides targeting of special reconnaissance. Simultaneously, HUMINT is conducted using any persons who might know the urban area and threat. This includes civilians (allies, aides, neutrals, obstacles, and hostiles) and POWs. Finally, tactical conventional reconnaissance assets including reconnaissance forces, aviation, artillery radar, signals intelligence, and UAVs are directed at the urban area. All these sources and data are linked through digital

INFOSYS to provide commanders and their subordinates with improved situational understanding and a COP.

6-50. **Collateral Damage Considerations.** Commanders also assess the collateral damage risks that his operation may include. This assessment helps to initially determine the viability of a course of action. However, commanders reassess their courses of action at frequent intervals in urban offensive operations based on known information to determine if the original evaluations remain valid. This reassessment minimizes potential collateral damage from a change in mission or a change in a course of action. Many aspects of the environment can change during mission execution.

6-51. **The Environment's Effects on Courses of Action.** The urban environment's unique aspects can significantly impact the course of action chosen by Army forces and the threat. Commanders assess these effects in planning, but they also verify and monitor these effects as forces execute offensive missions. In particular, commanders will want to confirm the civilian population's locations, beliefs, and actions and to monitor any changes. They will need to validate terrain considerations and monitor how any changes based on rubble and other damage to structures. In urban terrain, dead space, cover, and concealment can only be identified physically and will change considerably as operations affect the terrain.

SHAPE

6-52. Commanders of major operations have a primary contribution to urban operations: the planning and conduct of effective shaping operations that set the conditions for subordinate tactical success. In urban operations, isolation will be a critical condition. Effective isolation will require persistent, continuous surveillance and reconnaissance, innovative use of fires and maneuver (including effective force allocation decisions), and well-established sensor-to-shooter links. These efforts—combined and synchronized with SOF's direct actions, IO that minimize noncombatant influences, and necessary shaping attacks (particularly the seizure of a foothold)—establish the conditions necessary for the subsequent offensive domination of the area.

Isolation is Essential

6-53. One key to success in the history of urban operations has been the effective isolation of the threat force (see Figure 6-11). This applies today and equally well to major urban offensive operations as it does to smaller-unit attacks. This isolation not only denies access to the urban area from outside but also contains threat forces within. In a modern metropolis or megalopolis, this can appear a daunting task. Operational isolation requires dominating all physical and electronic contact between the threat in the urban area and supporting threat forces outside the urban area. This does not necessarily require physically encircling the urban area, but it does require that Army forces be able to exert *control* over the area's entire perimeter, as well as decisive points within. For a sprawling urban area, successful isolation may require the commitment of a large amount of resources.

6-54. Successful isolation of the urban area depends as much on the nature of the threat as it does on any other factor. A conventional threat in a large

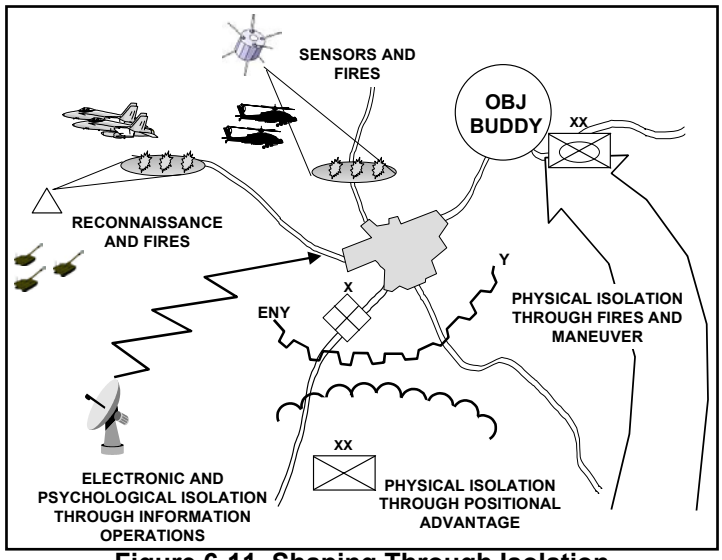

Figure 6-11. Shaping Through Isolation

urban area may be much easier to isolate than an insurgent threat in a much smaller urban area. The forces needed in the former situation may be less than those needed in the latter. The more the characteristics of the threat are conventional in nature generally the easier it will be to isolate him using standard combat methods and equipment. Isolating a more unconventional force requires many of the same techniques as used against conventional forces. It also requires a much greater ability to conduct offensive IO, to integrate CA units and civil-military operations (CMO), and to work with allies and local authorities. Fundamentally, isolating a less conventional threat puts increased emphasis on separating combatants from noncombatants.

6-55. **Offensive Isolation Objectives.** Isolation seeks to achieve two primary objectives with respect to defeating a threat's urban defense:

- Weaken the overall coherence of his defense.
- Manipulate or limit his maneuver options.

Isolating the threat in the urban area from external support, as well as isolating him from sources of support within the urban area, weakens his overall defense. The defense is weakened through a combination of attrition (the threat cannot replace his losses) and the diversion of his combat power from the defense to operations to counter the isolation effort. Isolation can also prevent the threat from shifting his forces to reinforce decisive points in the urban area or to conduct counterattacks.

6-56. **Persistent Surveillance.** Persistent surveillance of the urban area is essential to all types of actions used to isolate an urban area and as complete as resources will allow. Surveillance of the urban area relies on either reconnaissance forces or sensors continuously observing or monitoring urban avenues of approach. This network of ISR assets updates the commander's assessment of the situation and provides the means to quickly identify and, if necessary, attack threat elements as they move. However, particularly with sensors, commanders know that not each detection is necessarily an enemy to be attacked. Noncombatant activity clutters the environment making it easier for threats to disguise themselves and increasing the burden (and the number of resources required) on Army forces to distinguish friend from foe.

6-57. **Fires and Maneuver.** Fires and maneuver may be used to achieve isolation, either singly or in combination. (As always, effective obstacles,

monitored by sensors or observation, are integral to any isolation technique.) First, attacking forces can pre-position themselves along avenues of approach to deny entry and exit through positional advantage. Relying primarily on this method of isolation, particularly around a large urban area with multiple avenues of approach, can be resource intensive. Instead, the pairing of fires and maneuver provides attacking commanders more flexibility and allows them to isolate several avenues of approach with fewer resources. Highly mobile attack helicopters are ideal for this purpose as long as these operations occur outside the threat-controlled portions of the urban area. In these threat-controlled areas, it is more difficult to identify, eliminate, or effectively suppress the air defense threat. The threats may have numerous man-portable air defense weapons and enhanced effects of small arms used for air defense. Therefore, the risk to using this equipment may outweigh the potential benefits. However, mobile ground units—such as an air assault (subject to the same air defense threat considerations as attack aviation), armored, or mechanized forces—can also rapidly move to attack and destroy a threat moving in or out of an urban area. Potential disadvantages of the combined, fires and maneuver, option are that the—

- Critical assets, on standby and dedicated to isolation efforts, may be unavailable for other missions.
- Attacking force may not locate the threat in time to complete its mission (an inherent risk to any attack).

6-58. Another alternative relies on indirect or joint fires alone to destroy the threat force. Its disadvantage is that fires alone rarely destroy or even stop a force from moving into or out of an urban area. Although targets and avenues of approach will require continual surveillance, it is usually a less resource-intensive option than those that include maneuver. It also does not normally require fires assets to remain on standby to accomplish the mission. However, fires must be able to reliably and quickly respond, which may not be the case for joint fires—particularly aircraft. For Army field artillery units and naval gunfire, the units must be in range, which requires careful positioning. A skilled threat can avoid interdiction fires by using the geometry of the area to identify gaps due to obstructing terrain or the firing unit's range limitations. It can also use concealment and weather to avoid observation. However, effective sensor-to-shooter links throughout the urban battlefield will reduce the threat's ability to hide (see Figure 6-12). A resolute threat may risk significant losses to fires to prevent isolation or may attempt to use noncombatants as a shield. Ultimately, commanders use innovative combinations of all techniques discussed. Some units will physically block key avenues of approach. Surveillance will monitor less important routes and avenues. Artillery fires, joint fires, and maneuver

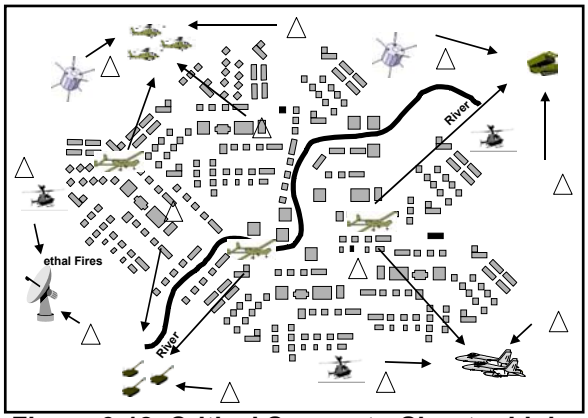

Figure 6-12. Critical Sensor-to-Shooter Links

units will then respond to the results of surveillance depending on the circumstances.

6-59. **Threat Reactions.** The reaction of the threat to the effects of isolation will depend on his mission, morale, force structure, and overall campaign plan. The threat may recognize isolation actions early and withdraw from the urban area before isolation is completed instead of risking destruction. On the other hand, the threat, based on a different or flawed assessment (perhaps a perception shaped by the Army force commander), may choose to—

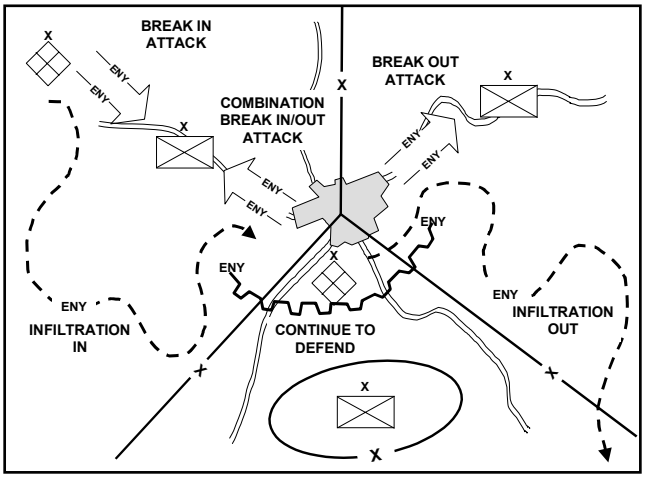

Figure 6-13. Reactions to Isolation

- Continue to defend and conduct local counterattacks.
- Attack to break into the urban area or infiltrate forces and supplies in.
- Attack to break out of the urban area or infiltrate forces out.
- Or any combination of the above (see Figure 6-13).

6-60. Attacking commanders consider how the threat leadership's subsequent actions will affect the continuance of overall offensive operations. They deliberate many considerations, to include—

- The allocation of more forces to the shaping operations to isolate the urban area.
- The allocation of more combat power to achieve rapid penetration and seizure of objectives to take advantage of developing threat dispositions in the urban area.
- Effects of the isolation on the urban population—either as a direct effect or as a response of the threat force being isolated.

Isolating the Urban Area
Hue, Vietnam – January to February 1968

On 31 January 1968, the 4th and 6th North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regiments and attached NVA and Vietcong (VC) sapper battalions attempted to seize control of Hue from the South Vietnamese Army's (ARVN) 1st Division as part of the North Vietnamese Tet Offensive. The attack, which was launched with complete surprise, successfully established temporary control over most of the city and occupied strong defensive positions within the city's ancient fortress known as the Citadel. However, it did not capture the headquarters of the ARVN 1st Division located in the Citadel nor the US military assistance command—Vietnam (MACV) compound located in the southeast part of the city.

Both ARVN and US forces swiftly reacted to the NVA attack. Within 24 hours, ARVN infantry and cavalry units counterattacked to recapture the Citadel. South of the Perfume River, the 1st Marine Division began attacking to clear the southern portion of the city (see Figure 6-14).

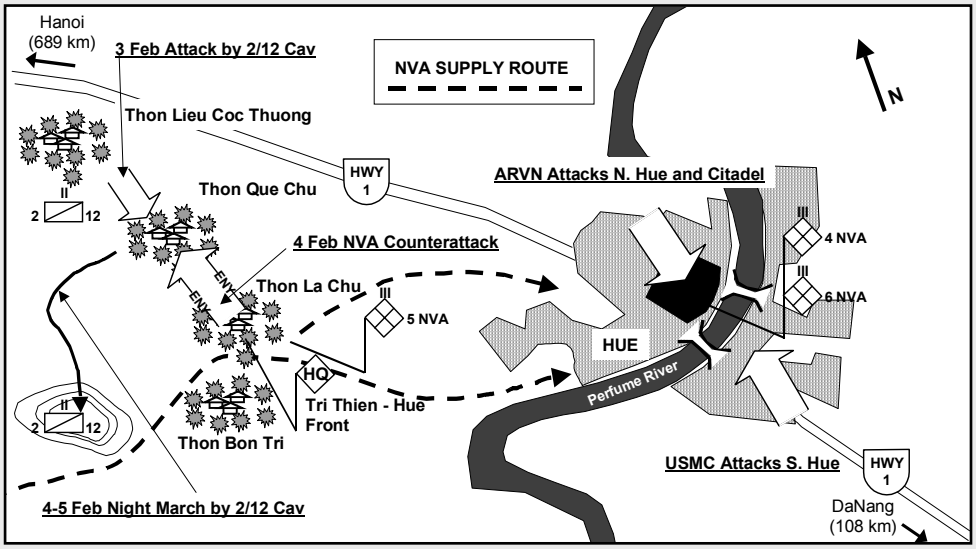

Figure 6-14. Initial Attack to Isolate Hue

On 2 February, the first Army unit was committed to Hue. The 2-12th Cavalry (an infantry battalion) was ordered to attack southeast along Highway 1 and clear enemy interdicting that route. On 3 February, 2-12th Cavalry began their attack moving along the south side of the highway. The plan was to clear a series of small hamlets in succession en route to the city itself. The first hamlet, Thon Lieu Coc Thuong, was cleared easily. Moving toward the second hamlet, Thon Que Chu, the battalion encountered a strong enemy force that was well entrenched. Air and artillery supported the battalion as it attacked and captured the hamlet against strong resistance. The battalion dug in for the night and prepared to resume the attack against the third hamlet, Thon La Chu, on 4 February.

Unknown to the 2-12th Cavalry, Thon La Chu was the headquarters of the Tri Thien-Hue Front, and it was defended by the NVA's 5th Infantry Regiment. Also important, the hamlet sat astride the NVA's primary supply route to the regiments fighting in Hue. The NVA was determined that 2-12th Cavalry's attack would not succeed; the NVA would destroy the threat to the Hue LOCs.

As the 2-12th Cavalry prepared to resume the attack on 4 February, the NVA fiercely counterattacked with all three battalions of the 5th NVA Regiment. It soon became apparent that 2-12th Cavalry could not continue to attack. As the day continued and the NVA pressure steadily increased, the battalion began to lose its position in Thon Que Chu. To avoid destruction, the battalion broke contact.

As darkness fell on 4 February, 2-12th Cavalry broke contact with the NVA. However, instead of retreating north back to its start line, the battalion moved west and then south to good defensive high ground deeper in the NVA AO. Eleven hours later the battalion was set in its new defensive position.

At dawn on 5 February, 2-12th Cavalry was established 5 kilometers west of Hue. The battalion soon observed enemy forces and supplies moving toward Hue. From its high ground position, the battalion directed artillery and air strikes against the NVA forces. By its bold move to bypass the 5th NVA Regiment, the battalion held perfect position to direct fires on the primary NVA supply line into Hue. These fires were the first step toward isolating the NVA in Hue.

The fires controlled by the 2-12th Cavalry shut down the NVA LOCs into Hue during the daytime. However, under the cover of darkness supplies and reinforcements were still entering the city (see Figure 6-15). The isolation of the NVA in Hue required the capture of Thong La Chu. The problem facing American forces was concentrating combat power against the NVA. All US units at this time were actively engaged against the numerous NVA attacks that constituted the NVA's 31 January Tet Offensive.

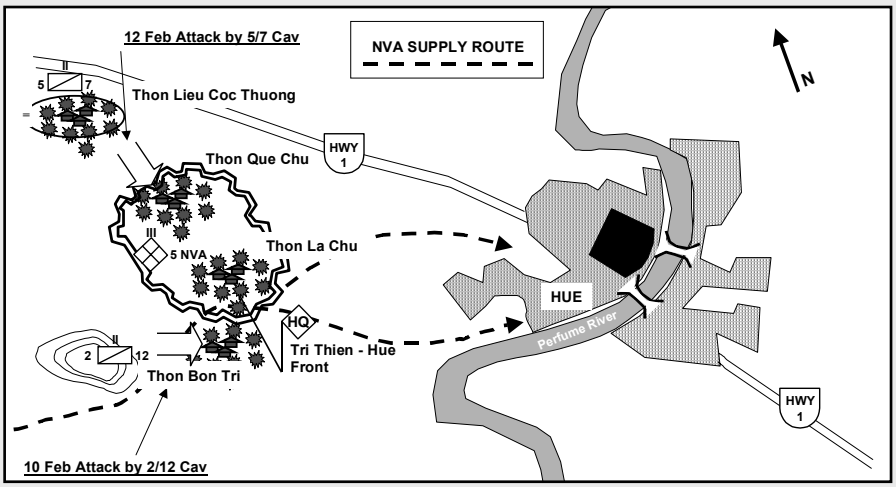

Figure 6-15. Subsequent Attack To Isolate Hue

The first additional American unit was not available until 12 February when the 5-7th Cavalry attacked Thong Que Chu much like the 2-12th Cavalry had attacked previously. The 5-7th Cavalry had even less success against the totally alert 5th NVA. The 5-7th Cavalry was forced to occupy defensive positions in Thon Lieu Coc Thuong and await the build up of combat power before it could continue to attack. In the interval, 2-12th Cavalry had moved off the high ground and captured the hamlet of Thon Bon Tri, south of the 5th NVA Regiment.

On 21 February, the 1st Cavalry Division had moved enough resources to the area to launch an effective attack to isolate Hue (see Figure 6-16 on page 6-24). In addition to the 5-7th and 2-12th Cavalry, the 1-7th Cavalry arrived in the AO and the 2-501st Airborne Infantry of the 101st Airborne Division was attached. On 21 February, after a combined artillery, air, and naval gunfire bombardment, the four battalions attacked the Thon La Chu stronghold. Elements of the 5th NVA Regiment were either destroyed in place or fled northeast. The next day resistance in Hue was noticeably lighter. US Marine and ARVN units began the last phase of fighting to recapture the Imperial Palace. On 26 February, the North Vietnamese flag was removed from the Citadel and the ARVN I Corps declared the city secured.

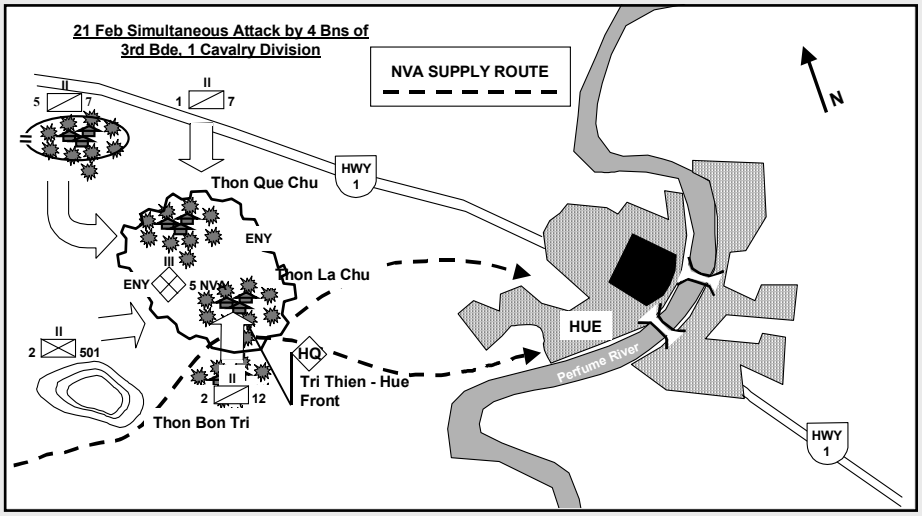

Figure 6-16. Final Attack to Isolate Hue

The actions of the 1st Cavalry Division forces northwest of Hue demonstrated the importance and the difficulty of isolating an enemy fighting in an urban area. Isolating Hue was difficult not only because of the dispersion and surprise with which the Tet Offensive caught US forces, but also because of the tenacity of the NVA. At least one-third of the combat power of the NVA in the Hue AO was focused on maintaining access to the city.

Hue's isolation had an immediate and important, if not decisive, impact on the operations. It not only resulted in restriction and then elimination of supplies and reinforcements, but it also immediately impacted the conduct of the defending NVA forces. Isolation caused an immediate drop in NVA morale and changed the nature of the defense. Once the enemy was isolated from external support and retreat, the objective of the NVA in the city changed from defending to avoiding destruction and attempting to infiltrate out of the city.

Direct Action by Special Operations Forces

6-61. Although SOF in urban offensive operations will likely conduct essential reconnaissance, they also have a direct action capability to shape the offensive operation (see Figure 6-17). Special Forces and Rangers can use direct action capabilities to attack targets to help isolate the urban area or to directly support decisive actions subsequently or simultaneously executed by conventional forces. Successful attacks against

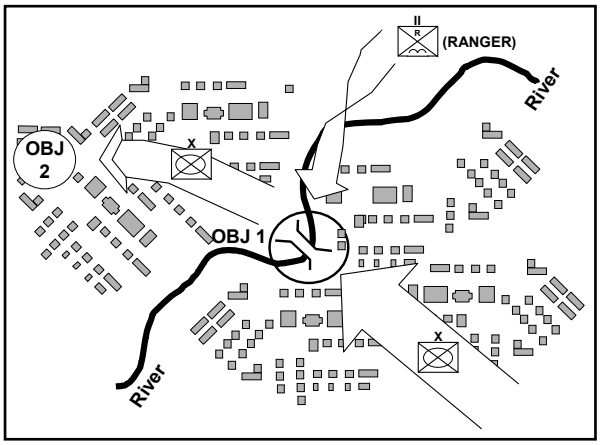

Figure 6-17. Coordination of SOF and Conventional Capabilities

urban infrastructure, such as transportation or communications centers, further the area's physical and electronic isolation. Direct action against command centers, logistics bases, and air defense assets can contribute to the success of conventional attacks by destroying or disrupting key threat capabilities. Direct action can also secure key targets such as airports, power stations, and television stations necessary for subsequent operations. Direct action by Special Forces and Rangers in these operations can reduce potential damage to the target or noncombatant casualties.

Information Operations

6-62. Regardless of how Army forces physically isolate the urban area, they combine physical isolation with IO to electronically isolate the threat and undermine his morale. Electronic isolation will cut off communications between forces in the urban area from their higher command to deny both from knowing the other's status. IO combined with isolation may persuade the threat's higher command or leadership that its forces located in the urban area are defeated. Thus, the command or leadership's intentions to break through to the besieged threat forces may be affected. PSYOP can undermine the morale of the threat in the area and reinforce electronic isolation and perceptions of abandonment. IO can be used to reduce any loyalty the civil population may have to the threat. IO can also ensure that civilians have the information that minimizes their exposure to combat and, as a result, overall noncombatant casualties. In addition, IO aim to deceive the threat regarding the time and place of Army force operations and intentions.

Detailed Leader Reconnaissance

6-63. Army commanders clearly see the urban environment to understand the challenges facing their brigades, battalions, companies, platoons, and squads. Urban terrain can be deceptive until viewed from the soldier's perspective. Commanders are responsible to intimately know the conditions to allocate resources effectively to subordinate units. Often, particularly at battalion level and above, commanders will not be able to command and control dispersed forces from positions forward, but be forced by the terrain to rely on semifixed command posts. Detailed leader reconnaissance of the AO by commanders, their staff, and their subordinates before the mission can compensate for this challenge. This reconnaissance will give commanders a personal feel for the challenges of the terrain and will facilitate more accurate planning and better decisionmaking during operations.

Mission Orders

6-64. Before contact, commanders mitigate some terrain challenges to effective C2 using mission orders. Subordinates have mission orders to take advantage of opportunities before C2 systems can adversely

> *Often what seems to be the correct decision at one level of command may be otherwise at other echelons. It is essential that leaders consider not only the perspective of their own unit, but that of other relevant participants as well, to include the enemy, adjacent friendly units, higher headquarters, and noncombatants.*
>
> Lesson Number 18
> *An Attack on Duffer's Downtown*

impact the environment. To see the battle and provide effective and timely direction, tactical leaders will follow closely behind units as they assault buildings, floors, and rooms. Thus, only the most mobile INFOSYS can accompany tactical leaders into combat, and they will suffer the degrading effects of the environment. Mission orders permit rapid and decisive execution without commanders intervening at battalion level and above. Higher-level commanders facilitate mission orders through their subordinates by articulating their desired end state, clearly stating their intent, and building flexibility into the overall plan.

Effective Task Organization

6-65. Commanders can shape urban offensive operations through effective and innovative task organization. Combined arms, starting with an infantry base, are essential to success and may be an asymmetric means of defeating an urban threat. Urban attacks will quickly break down into noncontiguous firefights between small units. To achieve the tactical agility for mission success in this nonlinear environment, many Army capabilities are task organized down to the company, platoon, and squad levels. Infantry provides the decisive capability to enter buildings and other structures to ensure threat destruction. Tanks, gun systems, and fighting vehicles provide additional mobility, direct firepower, and protection. Field artillery provides the indirect (and if necessary, direct) firepower. Such mobility and firepower create the conditions necessary for the dismounted infantry to close with and destroy a covered threat in an urban defense. When a threat skillfully uses the urban area to limit ground maneuver, vertical envelopment or aerial attack using precision-guided munitions from Army aviation may circumvent his defenses and achieve necessary effects. Generally, ground systems used *within* the urban area will not be able to operate independently from dismounted infantry. The infantry will be required to protect armor and mechanized systems from close antiarmor weapons, particularly when those weapons are used from rooftops and basements.

6-66. In urban offensive operations, direct fire support can be critical. Armor vehicle munitions types do not always achieve decisive effects against some urban structures. In some cases, field artillery high explosive munitions work better than armor for direct fire support of infantry. Large caliber (105 or 155mm) high explosives directly fired at a structure often produce a more severe shock effect than tank and fighting vehicle cannon and machine guns produce. This is not just a weapon but a weapon system. As such, artillery may be placed under tactical control (TACON) of maneuver commanders, such as a platoon of three guns TACON to a company or a battery to a battalion, not just one gun to a company or other maneuver unit. Self-propelled artillery has some of the mobility characteristics of armor; however, it provides minimal ballistic protection from fragmentation for the crew. Although these systems seem formidable, they provide less crew protection than a Bradley fighting vehicle, for example, and contain large amounts of onboard ammunition and propellant. They are susceptible to catastrophic destruction by heavy automatic weapons, light cannon, and antitank fire. Therefore, infantry units carefully secure and protect these systems (even more so than armored vehicles) when employed in urban offensive operations, particularly when forward in the direct fire role.

6-67. Army aviation may also be inventively task organized. It can support urban operations with lift, attack, and reconnaissance capabilities. Tactical commanders down to company may use all these capabilities to positively influence ground close combat. Army attack and reconnaissance aircraft can provide flank security for attacking ground forces. Attack aircraft may also provide direct fire support to individual platoons or squads. Lift may move entire battalions as part of brigade operations, or it may move single squads to a position of advantage (such as a roof) as part of a small unit assault. Army aviation can assist with C2 by providing airborne retransmission capability, airborne command posts, and the confirmed status and position of friendly forces. However, Army aviation is a limited and high-value asset; commanders review its use in innovative task organizations. It is particularly vulnerable to urban air defense threats unless used over terrain secured by ground forces. From these positions, aircraft can use enhanced sensors to conduct reconnaissance and use precision weapons with standoff capability.

Creative Task Organization: Using Artillery in the Direct Fire Role

Task organizing artillery to permit its use in a direct fire role demonstrates the innovative task organization required for urban operations. The following provides three historical examples of task organizing and using field artillery for a direct fire role.

In 1944, US Army units of the 1st Infantry Division were assigned to attack and seize the German city of Aachen. The city's internal defense included bunkers designed to serve as air raid shelters. These positions, buildings of stone, were impervious to direct fire tank weapons, demolitions, and small arms. To reduce the positions, the 1st Infantry Division relied on the artillery's direct fire.

Field artillery used this way had physical and psychological effects on the defenders. The 26th Regimental Combat Team's history of the battle describes the German reaction to the artillery pieces:

> *The chief shock to the defenders, Colonel Wilck (Aachen defense commander) said, came from the self-propelled 155s and tanks. The colonel spoke with considerable consternation of the 155mm self-propelled rifles. A shell from one of the guns, he said, pierced three houses completely before exploding and wrecking a fourth.*

The 26th Infantry Regiment also described how the artillery, one piece attached to each assaulting infantry battalion, helped the infantry to penetrate buildings.

> *With solid blocks of buildings comprising most of the city, there wasn't any easy way to get at the Germans in the buildings. The eight-inch gun solved the problem. Beginning on the eastern outskirts the gun would plow a round into the side of the built up block of buildings at about ground level. One shell would usually open an entrance into the first tier of floors, i.e. the first building. Then several more shells were fired through the first hole. Thus a tunnel would be rapidly made all the way to the next cross street. Soldiers could then rush the newly formed entrance, clear the upper floors with hand grenades and rifles and then move on to the next building to repeat the process. When a block or*

square, was thus completely cleared of Germans—soldiers, skulkers, or even snipers—the next square was treated in the same way, working forward square by square, right and left, thereby avoiding nearly all exposure in the streets.

In 1982, Israeli forces invaded southern Lebanon to destroy base camps of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). This operation involved significant fighting in urban areas including major operations in Beirut. Artillery, firing in a direct fire role, played a major part of the tactical solution. Artillery was particularly effective in the 33-day siege of Beirut. During this siege, Israeli forces used artillery in its traditional role as well as in the direct fire role.

The Israeli army was committed to a policy of disproportionate response during the Beirut siege. When fired on with small arms, crew-served weapons, tanks, or indirect artillery, the Israeli forces responded with intense, high-caliber direct and indirect fire from tanks and artillery positioned around the city. Many firing positions were on heights to the south and southwest that dominated much of the city. These positions had almost unrestricted fields of view. Israeli artillery fired from these positions directly into high-rise buildings concealing PLO gunners and snipers. The artillery, using direct fire, destroyed entire floors, collapsed floors on top of each other, and completely removed some upper floors. Such a response, as in Aachen in 1944, had as much a psychological impact as it did a physical impact on the PLO defenders.

In the early hours of 20 December 1989, the US launched OPERATION JUST CAUSE. One of this operation's objectives was removing the Panamanian dictator, Manuel Noriega. US forces carefully planned using all fires before the operation to minimize casualties and collateral damage. Part of this detailed fire planning called for applying artillery in a direct fire role.

The Panamanian Defense Force's (PDF) 5th Rifle Company based at Fort Amador was one of the key objectives of US forces at the start of hostilities. This unit was high priority because it was the closest PDF unit to Noriega's headquarters, the Comandancia. US forces expected the 500-man company to react first to OPERATION JUST CAUSE by reinforcing the defense of the Comandancia. It also posed a threat to US military dependents housed at Fort Amador.

To quickly neutralize this force, the US assembled a three-company force composed of A, B, and headquarters elements of 1-508th Infantry (Airborne), supported by 105mm towed howitzers of 320th Field Artillery and M113 armored personnel carriers. The howitzers and the personnel carriers were covertly prepositioned at the fort. At approximately 0100, helicopters transported the two airborne rifle companies into position. The howitzers then suppressed any personnel in the PDF-controlled buildings on Fort Amador while demonstrating the firepower of the US task force. They used direct fire into the PDF barracks. The impact of the 105mm high explosives and .50-caliber fire from the M113s convinced the PDF infantry to give up after token resistance. Following the direct fire, US infantry assaulted and cleared the dozen PDF buildings, finding that most occupants had fled or surrendered. For more details of OPERATION JUST CAUSE, see Applying the Urban Operational Framework: Panama in Chapter 5.

The three examples cited indicate the importance of the innovative task organization of artillery and its use in the direct fire role. Using artillery helps overcome some challenges of offensive operations in the urban environment, and it has an important psychological effect on a defending threat. Such task organization takes a traditional tool of a higher-level tactical commander and uses it to directly influence the company-level battle. This philosophy of task organization can be applied to other types of forces—not just artillery. PSYOP teams, interpreters, CA specialists, armor, and reconnaissance teams may require task organization different from traditional organization. The compartmented urban environment drives the requirements for these assets lower in the tactical scheme than in open operations. Consequently, commanders understand and account for more of these assets for UO than for operations in less restrictive environments.

Shaping Attacks

6-68. In a large urban area, the defending threat cannot be strong everywhere. Shaping operations can also take the form of attacks against vulnerable positions to force the threat to maneuver and redeploy his forces in the urban area. This prevents him from merely defending from prepared positions. Forcing the threat to move negates many of the defensive advantages of urban terrain, confirms his dispositions, exposes vulnerable flanks, and permits target acquisition and engagement with precision standoff fires.

6-69. A critical shaping operation in urban offensive operations is usually an initial attack to seize a foothold. Once Army forces establish this foothold, they accrue some of the defensive advantages of urban terrain. From this protected location, Army forces continue offensive operations and have a position of advantage against neighboring threat defensive positions.

DOMINATE

6-70. Commanders may employ several methods to dominate the urban area during offensive operations. These include—

- Bold maneuver.
- Appropriate use of SOF.
- Precise application of fires and effects.
- Proper balance of speed and security.

None is unique to UO. Their effective execution, however, allows Army commanders to dominate in this challenging environment by effectively using resources with the least amount of collateral damage. Overall, domination results from urban offensive operations when forces achieve the objective of the assigned mission and establish preeminent control over the necessary terrain, population, and infrastructure. Largely, the Army commander's ability to dominate is based on understanding and accepting the challenges posed by the urban environment and using that knowledge to his advantage.

Bold Maneuver

6-71. Commanders of major operations may have or create the opportunity to seize an urban area with bold maneuver. Such maneuver requires striking

while the area remains relatively undefended—essentially preempting an effective defense. This opportunity occurs when the urban area is well to the rear of defending threat forces or before the onset of hostilities. Under such conditions, an attack requires striking deep behind threat forces or striking quickly with little time for the threat to make deliberate preparations. Attacks under such conditions may entail significant risk; the potential benefit of audacious offensive operations may be well worth possible losses. Such attacks can be accomplished three ways (and their combinations):

- Airborne or air assault.
- Amphibious assault.
- Rapid penetration followed by an exceptionally aggressive exploitation, for example, a heavy force using shock, armor protection, and mobility.

6-72. Commanders analyze all potential urban operations to seek an opportunity or advantage to apply bold operational maneuver to the task. Using operational maneuver to avoid urban combat against an established threat defense potentially marks a significant operational achievement and can have decisive strategic consequences. Just influencing the threat's morale can positively affect all future operations. However, commanders evaluate the challenges of such a course of action. These challenges may include sustaining the operation; avoiding isolation and piecemeal destruction; successfully conducting shaping attacks; and achieving the necessary tactical, operational, and strategic surprise.

6-73. Commanders also build on the shaping effects of isolating the urban area internally and externally by attacking urban decisive points from multiple directions. They can attack multiple decisive points either simultaneously or in a systematic, synchronized manner. This complicates the threat's situational understanding of the urban environment, further impedes his decisionmaking, and allows Army commanders to dictate the tempo.

Bold Operational Maneuver to Seize an Urban Area
Inchon and Seoul, Korea – September 1950

In August 1950, UN forces in Korea were desperately attempting to stave off defeat by establishing a viable defense in southern Korea. This defense, known as the Pusan Perimeter, was the focus of the world's attention. The commander of US Forces Far East, General Douglas MacArthur, was not focused on the US Eighth Army in Pusan. Instead, he focused on how to dramatically and decisively transition to the offense—the recapture of the South Korean capital of Seoul.

Seoul was more than just the South Korean political capital, although that was an important consideration. Seoul was the key to the Korean transportation system, the hub of the national communications system, and the center of the country's economy and culture. It was also strategically placed astride maneuver corridors to the north, south, and northeast. It had been Korea's capital since 1394 when King Taejo Yi Sung-Gye established it as the center of the Chosun dynasty. It had been captured by the surprise communist invasion of the south in June 1950, and the key to success in Korea was its recapture. The question was how.

The obvious military solution to the Korean situation in August 1950 was to build military strength within the Pusan Perimeter and then, when sufficiently strong, to

counterattack north and recapture Seoul. The disadvantage of this course of action was that the counterattack would be through hundreds of miles of mountainous terrain, through several major cities, and across numerous rivers. The North Korean People's Army (NKPA) would be able to fall back from one mountain defense and one river line to another and would have weeks or months to prepare the defenses of Seoul.

MacArthur's solution was to delay a conventional counterattack, boldly maneuver by sea deep into the flanks of the NKPA, land on the Korean west coast at Inchon, and quickly seize Seoul before the enemy could react (see Figure 6-18). This course of action had numerous disadvantages: achieving surprise; assembling a landing force trained in amphibious operations; few good landing sites; supplying a large force once landed; and needing to simultaneously continue to defend and prepare a counterattack with the Eighth Army from Pusan. MacArthur understood the challenges of the operation but believed that the potential value compensated for the risk.

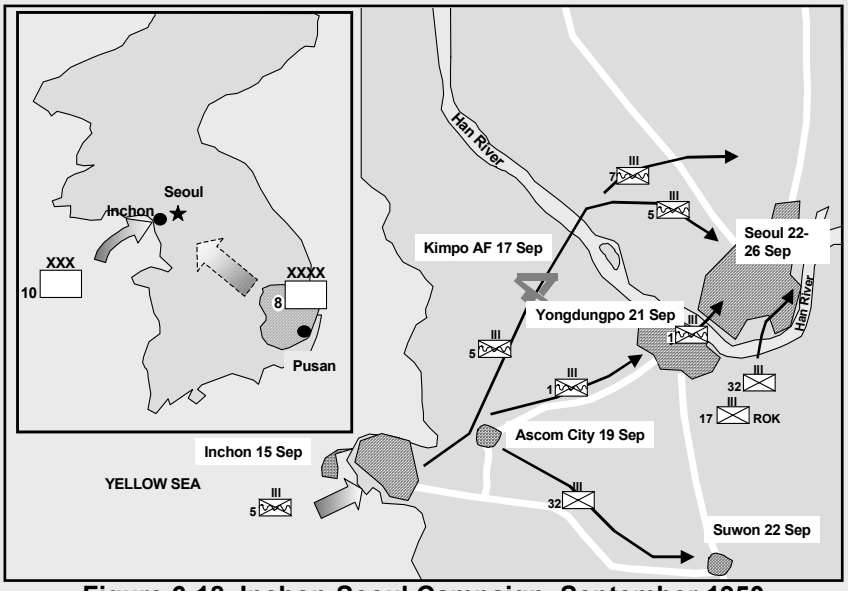

Figure 6-18. Inchon-Seoul Campaign, September 1950

The potential value of a quick assault on Seoul through a deep amphibious operation was immense. The operation would trap the bulk of the NKPA in South Korea and facilitate its destruction. It would also capture Seoul before the NKPA could prepare a defense. The quick recapture would immeasurably impact the morale of UN forces and South Korea. MacArthur felt the payoff of success justified the risks and challenges of the operation.

On 15 September, elements of the 1st Marine Division landed in Inchon taking the NKPA completely by surprise. On D+1 they were joined by elements of the 7th Infantry Division, both divisions under the control of US X Corps. Naval gunfire and Marine close air support flying from Navy aircraft carriers supported the landings. Seven days later, the 5th Marine Regiment had battled 25 miles to the outskirts of Seoul and began attacking the city from the north. Three days later, on 25 September, the 1st Marine Division and elements of the 7th Infantry Division had defeated the 10,000 defenders of the NKPA's 18th Rifle Division.

Most of MacArthur's predictions for the Inchon-Seoul campaign were accurate. Superb staff work, excellent logistics operations, and unmatched training permitted the UN forces to assemble a trained landing force, land it over one of the most difficult shores in the history of military amphibious operations, and keep it supported. More importantly, the operation achieved total strategic and operational surprise. Seoul was recaptured quickly and, although resistance was fierce, the NKPA could not react fast enough to influence the outcome. In conjunction with the Eighth Army counterattack from Pusan, 75 percent of the NKPA was destroyed. The Inchon-Seoul campaign was an important turning point in the war, and had not the Chinese People's Army intervened two months later, it would have been the decisive campaign of the war.

Appropriate Use of Special Operations Forces

6-74. Sometimes Army forces can dominate (instead of simply shape) the urban area using the direct action capability of SOF. When the threat fails to develop a comprehensive defense and does not possess large, capable conventional forces, then Army forces can achieve operational surprise. Commanders, by synchronizing conventional and SOF effects, may actively control offensive operations to dominate the area. Then, although SOF may be the primary striking force, conventional forces still are available to reinforce and assume the mission because of SOF limited logistic capability. OPERATION JUST CAUSE offers several examples of this type of synchronization (see Applying the Urban Operational Framework: Panama in Chapter 5).

Precise Application of Fires and Effects

6-75. Precisely applied fires and the massed effects of combat power characterize successful urban attacks. The fires can be direct fire from combined heavy or light ground teams; direct or indirect fires from supporting Army aviation standing off from the target and any possible air defense threat; or precision indirect fires from conventional tube artillery. All efforts strive to reduce collateral damage around the point of attack, consistent with mission success. Forces use fires to deny the threat the ability to maneuver in the urban area and to destroy the threat when he attempts to maneuver. When the threat exposes himself by moving, the environment no longer protects him, and fires can effectively engage him.

Proper Balance of Speed and Security

6-76. Attacking units balance speed and security. Forces secure flanks as units advance, control dominating terrain (buildings), evacuate civilians, and keep the integrity and synchronization of the combined arms team. Obstacles are anticipated and rapidly breached. Commanders choose avenues of approach to—

- Provide cover and concealment for following aviation and support units.
- Permit travel by all classes of vehicles.
- Easily defend from counterattack.
- Avoid nonessential centers of threat resistance.
- Avoid population centers

6-77. Army aviation is one resource to protect flanks. Another resource is engineers who seal off surface and subsurface entries and avenues along the flanks of the attack. Finally, as in all offensive operations, ground and air cavalry are ideal mobile forces to perform security in an economy of force role along flanks allowing decisive forces more freedom of maneuver.

TRANSITION

6-78. Effective transitioning allows commanders to continue the full range of Army operations in the urban area and elsewhere in the AO without unnecessary delays. Commanders accomplish this by thorough planning—including appropriate branches and sequels (revised as the situation changes)—that gives adequate consideration to postoffensive organizational, training, psychological, and civilian requirements. If properly prepared, commanders can anticipate potential mission changes and defeat a counterattack.

Early and Concurrent Transition Planning

6-79. Commanders can ensure smooth transitions of urban offensive operations by planning for postoffensive operations early. Based on the mission envisioned, they determine which subordinates and what type of force structure to use. Postoffensive missions, like all urban operations, encompass the full range of Army operations. At the successful conclusion of offensive operations, Army forces transition to some type of stability operation conducted concurrently with support operations. Commanders may leave the subordinate unit in place to execute the new mission, may reorganize the subordinate unit for the mission, or relieve the unit that just completed offensive operations with a new unit.

6-80. **Changes to Task Organization.** Commanders consider the organization of forces following offensive operations. Hostile civilians may require significant combat forces or military police forces to maintain stability. Friendly civilians may require a minimum of military police or combat forces, but significant logistic support. Commanders carefully consider the urban situation before deciding how to use combat forces that recently participated in a high-intensity offensive operation.

6-81. **Training and Psychological Considerations.** Many Army combat tasks may not support follow-on stability operations or support operations without considerable modification (if at all). Often, noncombat skills—not normally part of a unit's mission essential task list such as negotiating or mediating skills—will be required. However, the greatest modification required applies to each soldier's mental outlook. Forces that transition directly from combat to stability operations may not be psychologically prepared for a rapid and drastic change of mission. Commanders cannot expect troops who have just completed high-intensity offensive operations to exercise the sensitivity and judgment required in most stability operations. This especially applies if the population is hostile to Army forces. If combat forces assist in stability operations, particularly in hostile civilian situations, they should not have recent experience in high-intensity urban operations and they should have trained for the mission.

6-82. **Return to Civil Agencies.** Commanders also have the role of transitioning aspects of the urban offensive operation to civil, allied, NGOs, and other agencies as appropriate. Planning for transition is detailed and aims to quickly return as much civil control of the area as is feasible after the attack. Beyond civil control, civil agencies and NGOs assume tasks as completely and as rapidly as possible. These organizations are consulted and integrated into the planning process as early as possible. Commanders begin planning for transition when planning for offensive operations. They consider relinquishing control of urban areas to civil government, law enforcement, or NGOs before completing offensive operations. During the conduct of urban operations, these transition operations are closely synchronized with the execution of the attack.

Preparation for Potential Mission Changes

6-83. In urban offensive operations, like other offensive missions, the change in mission after a successful urban attack may be to a hasty defense or a continuation of offensive operations outside the area. However, in urban offensive operations the mission will just as likely change to a support or stability mission. This is particularly true if the unit has had special training and is task organized for urban operations. Stryker brigades, already optimized for urban environment by organization and training, are even more likely to remain after completing the mission.

6-84. Even more challenging than transition at the end of the mission is transition during the conduct of the mission. Soldiers may have a difficultly transitioning from stability to support, to offense and defense, and back again multiple times during an urban offensive operation. Soldiers may apply the tactics, techniques, and procedures of urban offensive operations to the stability or support missions with potentially disastrous results. Commanders need to segregate missions in time and space, and, if sufficient forces exist, by unit. Units below battalion level cannot have rapid mission changes from combat to noncombat or be expected to conduct more than one type of urban mission simultaneously. Whenever feasible given mission requirements, commanders permanently designate units to conduct stability or support tasks and not rotate units between offensive and defensive tasks to stability or support tasks.

Preparation to Defeat Counterattacks

6-85. Immediately after the conduct of successful urban operations, units are alert to rapid and violent counterattack. Rapid and decisive counterattacking in urban operations is extremely important to the defense because a quick counterattack can regain terrain before the offensive forces have consolidated and assumed the advantages of defending on urban terrain. Delaying a counterattack in UO, even for a few minutes, permits the environment's advantages to shift to the successful attacker. Thus, attacking units anticipate this reaction during planning and are prepared to defeat it during execution.